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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

The Outlook for Farm-Family Living

A radio talk by Mrs. Rowena Schmidt Carpenter, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, November 12, 1936.

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MR. SALISBURY: Now the outlook for farm-family living. You remember last week Mary Rokahr of the Extension Service told about some of the family planning questions the home management specialists from various States discussed at the conference in Washington. Those are problems farm families will be solving in 1937. Today, Rowena Schmidt Carpenter has come over from the Bureau of Home Economics to give us a few high lights from the 1937 farm-family living outlook -- facts that will help farm families in their economic planning. Mrs. Carpenter, did I hear you say there are better days ahead for families on the farm?

MRS. CARPENTER: It looks that way, Mr. Salisbury. You'll recall Mr. Thomsen reported last Friday that farm income has been on the increase this year. Taking the United States as a whole, it appears that income from agriculture will be about 11 percent higher in 1936 than in 1935, and the outlook for 1937 is for continued increase.

MR. SALISBURY: That's certainly good news. But what about debts and higher prices for the things the farmer uses in his business? Will these expenses more than use up the increase in farm income?

MRS. CARPENTER: No, the outlook is more optimistic than that! Lower interest rates and long-time plans for financing are all to the good so far as debts are concerned. And farmers have been spending less on production because they have harvested smaller crops. Of course many farmers need new equipment and some may be putting money into farm buildings next year. Families who had to sell off livestock because of the drought this summer will need to build up their herds again. But I still stick to my first statement and make it even stronger: taking the United States as a whole, farm income is on the increase, and farm families should have more choice in spending next year than they have had lately. And some farm families, at least, will have more cash to spend for family living.

MR. SALISBURY: Just what does that mean?

MRS. CARPENTER: Well, it means different things for different families, I guess. You see, in lean years such as we've been having lately, lots of farm families have pared their purchases to the bone. They have gotten along without many of the things they usually buy, and have depended more largely than usual on what the farm could produce -- food, fuel, home-made soap, and the like. This increased use of farm products, called the live-at-home program, has saved the day for farm families. They have been much better off than those

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city families who had no way of producing the things needed for everyday life, when jobs were at a premium and incomes stopped. But even so the farm family wardrobe and household furnishings began to get shabby, trips to the dentist and the doctor were postponed, and very little money was spent for education or for fun. Expense accounts kept by farm families the country over year after year show that as the family has had more money to spend, it has turned first to those items of family living that have been slighted. Sometimes purchased food made the first claim, sometime clothing, --

MR. SALISBURY: Just a minute. I thought you said farm families were well off compared to city families because they could raise their own food, and just now you said that one of the first items to claim a share of increased cash was food.

MRS. CARPENTER: Yes, I did. I said both of those things. When money is limited, families produce as much of the food they need as they can, but they still must buy some staples and they may not have just the foods they prefer. So with more money to spend they have increased their food purchases, and they may continue to do so in 1937. This will not necessarily mean that there will be less of farm garden and orchard products or less home-produced meat and chickens used. It probably will mean a more varied and a better balanced diet.

MR. SALISBURY: What else are farm families likely to be spending their extra income for in 1937?

MRS. CARPENTER: For home furnishings, for running the house, for education including books and magazines, for medical care, and for clothing as we said before. Not every family will spend for all of these items. The choice will depend upon the recent spending habits of the family. Some families who have restocked wardrobes and bought things for the house in the last two or three years may now make major improvements such as putting in a bathroom or remodeling the house. Families near electric lines are likely to have their homes wired and to buy electrical appliances. Have you heard the figures about the increase in rural electrification?

MR. SALISBURY: Perhaps not all of them.

MRS. CARPENTER: Well, over 70,000 farms were given electric service from January to June of this year, - more in 6 months than in any 12-month period since 1929. There were 860,000 electrically-connected farms in the United States by June, 1936. If the increase continues at the same rate, there may easily be 1,000,000 electrified farms by the end of 1937.

MR. SALISBURY: Seems as though the oil lamp and old-fashioned flat iron might be passing out of the farm picture, doesn't it? What did the Outlook report say about prices?

MRS. CARPENTER: Slight upward trends here and there; perhaps in fuel and lighting, in house furnishing goods, in shoes and other leather products. Food prices have gone up this year about 5 percent; there will probably be the usual seasonal changes in the price of eggs and dairy products and of fruits and vegetables. Meats are expected to be somewhat higher next spring and

summer. It is hard to predict for 1937 in general except to say the outlook is for some increase in food prices as a whole. ---Sounds like a weather forecast, doesn't it (slight change in temperature, partly cloudy here, fair and warmer there!)

MR. SALISBURY: I guess the Outlook for Agriculture and Farm Family Living is a little like a weather map of the U. S. Each covers the same wide territory. And fortunately each is broken down in local forecasts. There will soon be State and local outlook conferences to interpret the national report from Washington. You people listening in from various sections of the U. S. will be hearing more about the Farm Family Living Outlook for 1937 from your local extension leaders.

